

WASHINGTON, DC -

Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO) and Gene Taylor (D-MS) yesterday sent a letter to House and Senate leadership signed by 180 Democrats and Republicans expressing their disapproval of an amendment concerning abortion in the Senate FY2011 National Defense Authorization Act. If enacted the amendment would allow abortions to be conducted in all Department of Defense (DoD) military facilities.

“DoD medical facilities should remain focused on providing the best possible care for our military service members and their families, not providing abortion on demand,” said lead authors, Taylor and Akin.

The letter, signed by 180 Members of Congress reads, in part, “we urge you to reject any language in the DOD Authorization bill for FY11 (or subsequent years) which would weaken or undermine current policy. Expanding abortion in government owned and operated military medical facilities is simply unconscionable and morally unacceptable. Our military facilities should be a place of healing and life-saving. They should not be in the business of destroying the unborn.”

Akin said, “At a time when we are engaged in two wars, it is unfortunate that Senator Burris has decided to insert this contentious issue into the DOD Authorization.” Rep. Gene Taylor said that “Not only has Congress rejected similar amendments in the past, military medical personnel firmly rejected previous efforts to turn our nation’s military medical facilities into abortion clinics.”

Background

On May 27, 2010, in the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Roland Burris (D-IL) offered an amendment to the FY 2011 National Defense Authorization Act to strike Section 1093(b) of Title 10. The amendment, which passed by a vote of 15-12, will permit the performance of abortions in both domestic and overseas military facilities.

A similar amendment to allow abortions in overseas military facilities was most recently offered in the House in 2006 when it failed by a vote of 191-237 (

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). The amendment would have lifted the prohibition on abortion services for military hospitals located outside of the United States. The prohibition on abortion in domestic military hospitals would have remained. The Burris amendment is more expansive than the 2006 amendment because it allows abortion on both domestic and overseas military bases.

The Department of Defense's medical facilities across the country and around the world are intended to provide medical care to the men and women in uniform and their families. Current law does not permit abortions to be performed by DoD medical personnel or in DoD medical facilities except when the life of the mother is at risk or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest. There is no distinction in this policy between military facilities within the United States and those overseas. However, in the past Congress has rejected numerous attempts to allow abortion in overseas facilities, make DOD pay for abortions in the case of rape or incest, and/or

to mandate the morning-after-pill be stocked and dispensed in all facilities.

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